

Memories of Mother

[collected from e-mail musings of her children]

Dorothy Marita Forrant (1907 - 1971)

Pete: [19 January 2000]

Dear Siblings, I had two experiences today which support the subject title [It's a Small Blackledge-Related World]. Our VIP presentation today at NDU was by Mr. Kallock, who is the current Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Logistics. He started his briefing by telling us that he grew up in a town that probably no one had ever heard of: Ware, Massachusetts. After the briefing, I introduced myself and told him my Mother had grown up in Ware. He said he recognized the name of Forrant, but didn't know any of the family (which may be best where Grand-Dad and Grand-Uncle are concerned, according to Mike's research).

The second was in a class, where the instructor (as often happens to me) asked me if I am related to Todd Blackledge (the football player). Again, I recall the letter that Mike wrote to Todd a number of years ago to ask him about any relation; I believe Mike did not get a reply, or got an negative one ---- maybe he can refresh our memory. I still have the article on Todd which was in People magazine when he was All-American (?) at Penn State. Isn't Todd Blackledge a network commentator now on football games? Did he do Army/Navy? Why didn't he make it in the Pros, after such a strong start in college (I heard he didn't have a "quick release" pass).

Patti: [20 January 2000]

Yes, Richard and Allan (named for our Dad I think) Forrant are the two sons of Arthur (Uncle), Mom's brother. I do not know of any news about "granddad" who was dad of Arthur and Dorothy beyond his leaving/deserting his family when Dorothy was 7 years old. She, by the way, turned out remarkably well considering all this, also. I do believe that her marrying a man 11 yrs older, was the father-figure thing to a point. And the reason she broke off her (first) engagement with a man who became quite wealthy, we are told, was 100% due to religion (Catholic Vs. not).

It was weird for me to hear you refer to Dorothy's dad as granddad. I have never in my entire life considered that word for him. Isn't that sad?

"Granddad" belongs to Lewis Blackledge, to my memory. I do love these memory epistles. They are very important, and especially helpful on e-mail the minute they pop in our minds.

Mike: [20 January 2000]

Pete, you were right on about Ware - but Forrant was not a big name there (still is not); a better choice might have been Glancy, as Mom's grandmother (with whom she and Uncle Arthur and their mother lived with) was Julia Glancy, who had sold the farm and moved into Ware after her husband, Patrick Glancy, had died after some time in a coma from some sort of accident (1895). I think the family of Julia Glancy (Guarde or Guard) may have had some presence in Ware, as one of Mom's letters speaks of 'spending Sunday with the Guardes'.

You're also right, I did not get a reply back from Todd, but I did from his father Roy, who was hired as a coach with Pittsburgh Steelers after they signed Todd. But Roy only knew one or two generations back, very sketchy. My fellow genealogist/team member Mary Ann Blackledge (who all of us siblings met for dinner at your Afghan restaurant) is supposed to be working that family, but nothing (much) yet. Todd's picture is on my home page (www.mike.blackledge.com) - I have a little history of him somewhere - surprisingly, he ended up 6th in the voting for the Heisman trophy that year (1983), ahead of Dan Marino. (also beat Dan's college team Pittsburg in their senior year - Todd played for Penn State/Joe Paterno, you might remember).

Anyway, it's funny, Mary Ann gets the same question you do, and at first, she would answer, "Yes, he's my son!" Mary Ann has a son, Todd Blackledge, but he is studying arachnids for a PhD at Ohio State!

Pete: [20 January 2000]

Patti-Bun, Thanks! Perhaps I am confusing "Granddad Forrant (What was his first name, so I can drop the offending "Granddad" prefix?) with Arthur. I thought that was the father, but perhaps it was Arthur.

How did Richard and Diane get together? Does Allan have any children, and if so, are they close? How did Richard's and Allan's children turn out?

I agree with you that Mom turned out remarkably well considering her environment. I don't

understand her breaking the engagement over religion, as she was Catholic and Dad was not, yet they married. Don't you think it's remarkable that none of Dad and Mom's grandchildren are alcoholics, considering Mom's father and Dad's drinking problem?

I always remember Mike's phrase about kids: "It's the luck of the draw", and am often told that by folks who know wonderful people/parents who yet have a terribly troubled kid (like John Hinkley). I guess the Blackledge angel has been working overtime, as always.

Patti: [20 January 2000]

Re the catholic question; I have always explained my not being "pigeon-holed" as to religion because of my mother's decision to study all religions of the world when her second non-catholic love showed up, and giving up husband possibility no. 2 seemed ridiculous. She showed me some of the books that defined her beliefs, which I read (don't ask me names of books!). I do remember being shocked at the Koran's beliefs being exactly like the Bible's ten commandments. It was then that I decided that there are many paths to God.

Regarding the alcoholic problems: I do not think our Dad was an alcoholic, re his words to us/me of that fact. He was, I think, an habitual drinker who quit easily when he saw a very strong reason (losing feeling in his feet: peripheral neuropathy; and his children being very direct w/ him in our adult life). And how do we know about his/their grandchildren? They are still young.

Re Mike's "luck of the draw" comment. In many ways he is being humble. I do think personalities and the culture of the times have strong influences, as well as parental love and strong moral code giving/showing.

Pete: [20 January 2000]

I recall Mother being very non-religious, at least outwardly, as she steadfastly refused to go to Church with us on Sundays. She told me the closest religion for her was Unitarianism (indicating that was because it had few structured beliefs or requirements). I agree that Dad was not an

alcoholic, but I believe the term "drinking problem" is reasonable. I recall how saddened I was to see him come home from work each night , immediately start to have hard drinks, and within an hour or two turn into a completely different person. It was just the two of us sitting on the porch, eating dinner off T.V. trays (Mother was cloistered upstairs) while we watched the tube, and he would begin to slur his words and ramble. This was sad to me because I was so close to him otherwise, and respected/loved him so much. That is a primary reason that I do not drink. Once, in this state, he became violent for no reason I can recall, and knocked me down with a blow to my chest while we were standing in the kitchen. I was shocked, and he never seemed to remember it later, or at least never spoke of it. (Is this starting to sound like an Oprah show?).

Pete: [20 January 2000]

The other area I was wondering if anyone had info on is Mother's fiancée. As I recall, she was engaged (in Argentina I believe) to a Ph.D., but broke it off just before she left for Japan (as secretary to the U.S. Ambassador to Japan?) and met Dad on the cruise ship. Is this the same recollection others have, and does anyone know more, or why she ended the engagement?

Also, for Mike and his research: Is Uncle Arthur Mom's brother, who I believe was an alcoholic like granddad? All I remember was that Mother used to ask him, when he was drinking early on, "Oh Arthur, how can you do this after seeing what it did to Dad", referring to granddad's drunken and reported violent behavior. And are Richard Forrant and his brother (not remembering his name?) the sons of Uncle Arthur? If so, they seem to have turned out remarkably well considering being raised in that environment.

Penny: [20 January 2000]

I think that Mother broke off the engagement because he was a Roman Catholic and she decided that that was a religion which practiced too much control over one's life, like having you sign a paper that you'd raise your children as Catholics and having to regularly confess, then work off your sins.

Mother called the Roman Catholic church, "the iron hand in the velvet glove".

Andy would probably call it a "works oriented" religion, where you work your way to Heaven, which is of course impossible because, as Andy preached in several sermons, "How would you ever know if you had done

enough?"

Besides the Bible teaches that salvation is a gift of grace. It's God reaching "down" to mankind; whereas "religion" is man reaching up to God (and making up a lot of his own rules along the way).

Anyway, the end result is that Mother married Daddy who was not a Roman Catholic, but who was indeed a Christian.

Penny: [20 January 2000]

Dear Peter,

I'm so shocked, saddened and sorry to learn that Daddy knocked you down in the kitchen while in a drunken state.

I've always told people that my father drank excessively but was "never violent." What were the circumstances? How did you react? It must have happened when all the rest of us were gone on our "marriage ways".

Mother called herself a Unitarian because that is a church/religion which does not consider Jesus Christ to be anything but a teacher and not the son of God.

Yet Mother never attended the Unitarian church to my knowledge. In fact, Patti and I did attend the Unitarian church while living in Houston.

Remember your boyfriend Gregg, Patti, at that time, the first one who kissed you. He had lots of face acne but was quite handsome and nice.

My church boyfriend was Fred Duprey, who stood me up at the last minute for a school dance.

We were 15 or so with a few acne problems of our own.

Love, Penny

Patti: [20 January 2000]

Pete,

Aren't you happy that you started this remembering? It is so wonderful to do this before one of us leaves Earth.

I, too, was shocked by the push in the kitchen scene. I decided that you gave him "lip" as teenagers are given to doing. I do believe that one of the great family relationships was your and Daddy's. It probably saved you.

Pete, if you have not read [Angela's Ashes](#), put that first on your list when you finish your degree. It makes me think of Mother and her father all over again. The movie won't suffice, from what I've heard. The power in the book/story is in the verbiage and the humor and the unbelievable attitude.

Would you accept the word, "spiritual" for Mother in place of religious?

I remember the time Mother had too much to drink. She was two houses down from us one evening (Daddy was not there at that time) visiting a neighbor after we all had gone to bed. I heard giggling and laughing and went over to the window and saw Mother weaving across the lawns, giggling. The next day, she came right into our room and I asked what had happened and she said immediately, "I had too much to drink. I won't do that again." And she didn't. I also remember once when I was very sick with high fever and saw the window moving in vertical waves, which I knew, of course, could not really be happening. But I just had to tell someone what I saw, so I told Mother, fearing that she would deny it, and was so relieved when she said, "Yes, I know dear. It must look like that. It is all right." Mother NEVER lied to us in any way. Great lesson.

Pete: [24 January 2000]

Penny, This happened when I was in Pershing Junior High School, 7th or 8th grade, when you and Patti had long-left, Mike had gone off to USNA. I don't believe it occurred as a result of my giving him any "teenager lip", as I do not recall doing that due to my respect and love for him (unfortunately, I was not so constrained with Mother). I don't believe there was any "rage" on Dad's part; I believe it was more a result of:

(1) A lot of stress he was under. Dad mentioned that during this timeframe, there was a big cutback at Cameron Iron Works, and he thought he was going to get laid off with a lot of other people. He also mentioned, when he retired, that he was glad to be out from under all that stress. I believe his drinking so much during this time was "self-medicating" for his stress, as he had no other outlets (athletics, etc), and he and Mother were going through some very tough times (As Penny has said, there was no hormone

replacement therapy back then, and Mother was going through some significant changes). I remember Dad telling me much prior to this about how close he came to taking me and leaving Mother after one of their fights, due to problems they were having.

(2) In retrospect, I think it also had something to do with Dad's feeling he was growing older, and wanting to assert himself as his Dad had done with him. This deals with the story of how Dad had gotten into a disagreement with his own father as a teenager, and the two of them put on the boxing gloves, and GrandDad definitely had the better of Dad. That supposedly is also the basis for Dad's often telling us/me "Any time you think you can knock my ears down, just drop me a postcard" ---- which resulted in my, as a joke in elementary school, sending him a postcard which said "I can knock your ears down. Your son, Peter", which caused Dad to roar with laughter.

Bottom line: Although the incident was shocking to me when it happened, it obviously did not change my love for him, or our relationship later. -- Pete, the Rambling Scribe

Penny: [21 January 2000]

Mother did lie. She lied about Santa Claus. I remember distinctly when I discovered there was no Santa Claus from a couple of mean kids at school. I was very old, being born with a naive gene, and was about 9 or 10. I raced to Mother, and yelled, "Mother, Mother, you lied, you lied and you told us never to lie." I was distressed and distraught. Mother answered, "Now, now darling, Santa is the spirit of Christmas."

Lie #2 was telling me that Jesus was merely a great teacher, when in actuality, Jesus Christ shares the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Of course in this case, I doubt that Mother knew she was lying. So you see, it's not Santa, but Jesus Christ who is the true Spirit of Christmas.

Pete: [24 January 2000]

I recall the story that Mother had broken up with the PHD before leaving for Japan on the cruise ship, where she met Dad on his way to meet his ship in South China Sea. That would make sense time-wise, as there was a

significant time period of back-and-forth in the Pacific (during which time I believe Dad met, romanced, and then broke up with the White Russian; the break-up being when he told her he was going to marry Mother).

Regarding Barb, the interesting thing is that we were married by a Catholic priest. I believe we qualified due to the pre-marriage instruction the Catholic Church provided us. I also later worked with Barb to obtain an annulment from the Catholic Church, which we received, allowing her (and me) to remarry; so her marriage to Ed was also by a Catholic priest.

Mike: [23 January 2000]

Yes, Todd Blackledge does the commentary on ABC for college football games. He did do Army-Navy this year, but also this year he lost his previous position with ABC who brought in Terry Bowden [fired coach at Auburn, son of Florida State Coach Bobby Bowden and brother of Clemson coach Bowden].

Depends what you mean by 'make it in the pros.' He had, probably, a five or six year career [longer than most players, I would say], was a starting quarterback for some of that. He certainly wasn't the icon that Dan Marino and John Elway are [two other quarterbacks who came into the NFL the same year as Todd, 1983], but then very few are. You can find examples of Heisman Trophy winners who had essentially no career in pros [Navy's Joe Bellino is one example.]

Dan Marino is famous for his 'quick release', which indeed is part of his continued success [16 years for Elway and Marino is phenomenal]. But I think, like raising kids, success in the pros depends to some degree on luck of the draw - injuries, team, teammates, coach, opportunities, and some intangibles. Michael Jordan was not a super scorer when he played for Univ of North Carolina, for example, some say Coach Dean Smith did not want/need for him to play that role.

Pete: [24 January 2000]

I can identify with Todd's situation [as well as Michael Jordan's] with Dean Smith. No doubt, what would have been my own illustrious football career was similarly thwarted early on.

Whenever we played on the vacant lot on Gramercy, the instructions from the neighborhood quarterback to the potential pass-receivers were always the same:

"Frankie, you run a slant pattern to the left. Howard, you run a hook to the right. And Pete..... Pete, you go long." "How long?" "Don't worry about it; just keep on going". -- Pathos Pete, still waiting for the passes that never came

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